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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION REPORT - Iraq - Saddam Trial UNESCO - Cultural Diversity Transatlantic Relations

PARIS - Wednesday, October 19, 2005

(A) SUBJECTS COVERED IN TODAY'S REPORT:

Iraq - Saddam Trial  
UNESCO - Cultural Diversity  
Transatlantic Relations

B) SUMMARY OF COVERAGE:

The trial of Saddam Hussein which opens today is the lead front-page and editorial story. Some commentators agree that "a hastily put together trial is better than none" while others emphasize that "America's fingerprints are all over this trial." Still others note that "how the trial is conducted will determine Iraq's fate." (See Part C)

Le Monde devotes its lead to a poll by the Human Security Center of the University of Vancouver which concludes that conflicts have been reduced by 40 percent since 1992. The editorial comments: "While Cold War diplomacy was a source of conflicts, diplomacy since 1990 has constantly tried to be a generator of peace. Remaining threats are nuclear proliferation, terrorism, and the fact that the world's number one power continues to question today's international order, including the UN which has considerably helped the world to put out some of its fires." Le Monde interviews Gareth Evans of the International Crisis Group: "The fact that the U.S. has authorized the resolution on Darfur and on the ICC marks a great change in Washington's attitude, which has come about since Secretary Rice's arrival at the State Department."

Le Monde also carries on its front page an article entitled: "The U.S. Isolated at UNESCO." The convention on cultural diversity adopted at UNESCO elicits several articles and commentaries, which all point to America's thwarted efforts. (See Part C) Le Monde carries an op-ed by Culture Minister Donnedieu de Vabre titled "Cultural Diversity Is Not Arrogance." "UNESCO, which was created after the war aimed to serve world unity. It now must serve plurality. And this is not only a cultural project. It is also political in the widest sense of the word, because it is the foundation of peace. Cultural diversity is not arrogance. It is not a reflex of survival. It is an emergency in order to stop the spiral of integrism and trigger the spiral of peace and humanism." In right-of-center Les Echos analyst Jacques Hubert-Rodier writes a commentary titled "The Franco-American Quarrel Is Symbolically Over." (See Part C)

The economic papers report that "France is isolated in its attempts to control European Commissioner Mandelson's freedom in international negotiations, and specifically in the negotiations on agricultural subsidies."

(C) SUPPORTING TEXT/BLOCK QUOTES:

Iraq - Saddam Trial

"Let's Let the Iraqis Do Their Job"  
Pierre Roussel in right-of-center Le Figaro (10/19): "No matter what the situation on the ground, the Iraqis deserve to know the magnitude of what they have endured. The defense will harp on the conditions of the trial. But if Saddam is being tried at all it is thanks to the U.S. Army. Other dictators summarily executed were not so lucky. The Tribunal must avoid serving as a sound box for the Sunni insurrection. It must also keep from turning into a sideshow once the accused begins to tell his stories of past complicity with France and the U.S. For Iraq to emerge as a nation that respects the right of law, the trial must be irreproachable. Only then will we be able to say that a war that was waged under false pretexts has had a positive effect. Let's give the Iraqis a chance to do their job, remembering that the people of the Middle East are watching."

"Imperfect"

Patrick Sabatier in left-of-center Liberation (10/19): "Saddam's trial will be no exception to the rule of an

imperfect justice. But it is better than no justice at all. Having said this, it is also true that it will be difficult not to see the trial as a travesty of justice. America's attempts to not appear as being both judge and jury are not convincing. The former dictator will be judged by his enemies, Shiites and Kurds, and by the Americans. An international court would have been more convincing. This trial cannot serve as a foundation for the right of law in Iraq: it will exacerbate Sunni bitterness. Its only merit is that it will serve as a teaching tool and remind everyone of what it was to live under Saddam."

"Justice First and Foremost"

Bruno Frappat in Catholic La Croix (10/19): "Neither hate nor vengeance must guide this trial. And those who will treat Saddam as he never treated his opponents must be honored. Yet this trial should never serve as a case study in law schools. It was put together by Paul Bremer under conditions which do not grant it legitimacy. But the need for this trial goes beyond justice; there is a political stake: while Iraq has not yet found the peace and stability promised by the Bush administration, how the trial is conducted will determine the future of Iraq. A wise and non-hysterical trial will demonstrate maturity. A hasty one will be a missed opportunity."

#### UNESCO - Cultural Diversity

"A Strong Sign"

Jean-Claude Raspiengeas in Catholic La Croix (10/19): "The U.S., dead-set against the UNESCO convention, proposed a number of amendments and increased its pressure to minimize the import of the text. In the end, 151 nations made a strong gesture to say that activities of the mind could not be reduced to trade goods. This diplomatic breakthrough is to be noted. A diplomatic treaty is always indicative of a temporary power struggle. The U.S. cannot accept the idea that one of its principal and most influential export sectors could be contained. Having returned to UNESCO in order to fight this battle, the U.S. put all of its efforts to avoid this outcome. So much so that it upset its allies. Europe, urged by France and joined by Canada, put aside its differences in order to speak with one voice. Next comes the battle for the ratification."

"A Diplomatic Battle And America's Obstruction Efforts

Amplified the Convention's Import"

Natalie Nougayrede in left-of-center Le Monde (10/19): "Until the end, France's idea of 'cultural exception,' recently renamed 'cultural diversity,' elicited the opposition of the U.S. which feels that UNESCO's role is not to serve as an arena to resolve international trade issues. French diplomacy, strongly assisted by Canada, managed to raise support for a text that has become emblematic in the battle against globalization. French diplomatic circles could barely hide their glee as the U.S. found itself isolated. A diplomatic source added that this was all the more ironic that paradoxically, it was the U.S. obstruction efforts which gave the text such import."

#### Transatlantic Relations

"The Franco-American Quarrel Is Symbolically Over"

Jacques Hubert-Rodier in right-of-center Les Echos (10/19): "France and the U.S. have operated a spectacular rapprochement. Secretary Rice's visit to Paris served to illustrate the joint determination in keeping Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons. Bilateral military relations have also improved, as indicated recently by General Bentegeat who was awarded a medal in the U.S.: in short, the Atlantic alliance has not exploded. The Americans themselves recognize the 'spectacular contribution' made by France to NATO. The differences that remain are greatly minimized. including about Iraq. The hatchet between Paris and Washington has been buried. The reconciliation is real, even if it is due in part to lower opinion ratings for both national leaders." STAPLETON